

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 291414Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2634

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 9054

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE  
SUBJECT: CALL ON FONMIN BOUTROS

1. DURING CALL ON FONMIN BOUTROS DEC 27 WE DISCUSSED BRIEFLY A NUMBER OF ISSUES IN ADDITION TO THOSE ALREADY COVERED IN SEPTELS (US TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM; ISRAELI ATTITUDES TOWARD LITANI RIVER IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT; US-LEBANON CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT).

2. HEAVY WEAPONS COLLECTION. BOUTROS WAS CLEARLY OPTIMISTIC THAT SOME FORMULA WOULD BE FOUND WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE COLLECTION OF HEAVY WEAPONS FROM ALL THE PARTIES IN LEBANON. HE CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THAT VERY ACTIVE NEGOTIATIONS ARE GOING ON, BUT VOLUNTEERED NO DETAILS.

3. THE ARMY. BOUTROS, WHO IS ALSO DEFENSE MINISTER, INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS JUST AT THE BEGINNINGS OF RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ARMY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHO THE TOP OFFICERS OF THE NEW ARMY WOULD BE. BOUTROS WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE PRIORITIES WERE FIRST THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AND THEN THE ARMY, SINCE LEBANON COULD RELY PROVISIONALLY ON THE SYRIAN ARMY AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A LEBANESE ARMY, BUT NOT AS AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT FOR REAL POLICE WORK.  
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4. THE POLITICAL VACUUM. BOUTROS COMMENTED THAT HE WAS THE ONLY "POLITICAL MINISTER" IN THE CABINET, WHICH IMPOSED A VERY HEAVY BURDEN ON HIM. IN ADDITION TO THE DIFFICULT AREAS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE--HIS TWO FORMAL PORTFOLIOS--HE WAS AT THE HEART OF THE INTERNAL

LEBANON POLITICAL CONUNDRUM. HE SAID THAT A LOGICAL PROGRESSION IN THE REBUILDING OF THE STATE WOULD BE TO FIND A NEW POLITICAL FORMULA FIRST, THEN TO REBUILD THE COUNTRY ACCORDINGLY. IN FACT, THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT WAS PROCEEDING IN PRECCSELY THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, STARTING WITH RECONSTRUCTION, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE ON A "NON-POLITICAL" BASIS, HOPING THEREBY TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A NEW POLITICAL FORMULA SOME MONTHS HENCE.

5. COMMENT: BOUTROS SEEMS TO BE AWARE OF AND RELISH THE FORMIDABLE PROBLEMS HE IS FACING AND WILL CONTINUE TO FACE FOR SOME TIME. THE DISORDERLY NATURE OF EVERYDAY POLITICS HOWEVER CLEARLY RUNS AGAINST THE GRAIN OF HIS METHODICAL MIND.  
MOLINEAUX

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